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ABSTRACT

Providing a theoretical background behind the institutional effectiveness efforts at Jefferson State Community College (JSCC), in Birmingham, Alabama, this document describes an institutional effectiveness model devised by James O. Nichols and its application at JSCC. The Nichols Institutional Effectiveness (NIE) paradigm is a practical guide to implementing effectiveness efforts which fits most accreditation requirements, focuses on assessment results instead of processes, makes the institutional mission the basis for assessment, and raises the level of analysis to the institutional level. In addition, the NIE model includes four critical elements: (1) the establishment of an expanded statement of institutional purpose, including goals and mission; (2) an identification of intended results for all functions of the institution; (3) an assessment of the extent to which these results are achieved; and (4) adjustments made on the basis of assessment findings. After the initial implementation process, an annual cycle must be established so that the activities are integrated into the normal efforts of the institution. At JSCC, the application of the NIE model focuses on the interaction between the college's purposes, plans, and results, and the processes of planning, implementation, and assessment. When all the components and processes are fully integrated, the effective institution emerges. Includes graphs and flow charts. (MAB)

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THE NICHOLS INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MODEL* AND ITS ADAPTATION AT JEFFERSON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Presented as part of the NCRP Forum

MODELS FOR ASSESSING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

AACC ANNUAL CONVENTION
1993
Portland, Oregon

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THE NICHOLS INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MODEL* AND ITS ADAPTATION AT JEFFERSON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The institutional effectiveness model presented by James O. Nichols in *A Practitioner's Handbook for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Outcomes Assessment Implementation* is not a theoretical model about why to assess institutional effectiveness but rather a practical model designed to facilitate implementation. It is an adaptation of the rational planning model that has been described in the literature many times and occasionally practiced, if briefly, at some institutions. It is distinctive in the following ways:

- It precisely fits those components of institutional effectiveness assessment required by COPA (Council on Postsecondary Accreditation) and inherent in most regional accreditation processes.
- It focuses on assessment of results as opposed to processes and resource requirements.
- It makes the institution's mission or purpose the basis for institutional effectiveness assessment.
- It raises the level of analysis to the institutional level and incorporates assessment activities throughout the institution (instruction, community service, student support services, and administrative functions).

The four critical elements in the Nichols Institutional Effectiveness paradigm are as follows:

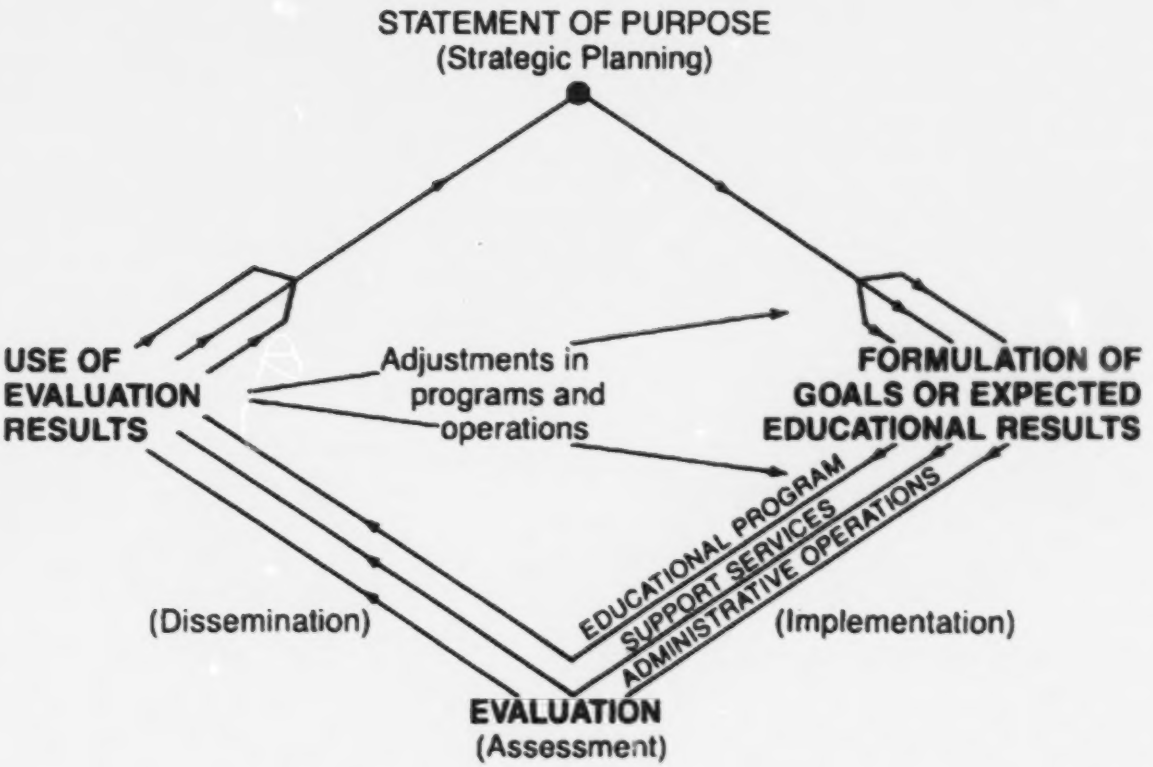
1. Establishment of an "expanded" statement of institutional purpose, which includes the mission statement and the institutional goals.

2. Identification of intended results for all functions of the institution, i.e. instruction, community service, student services, administrative services, etc. (Detailed design at the department, unit, program, or service area involves formulating statements of intended outcomes or objectives and linking those outcomes/objectives to the institution's purposes and goals and designing assessment criteria and procedures for each outcome/objective.)

3. Assessment of the extent to which these results are achieved.

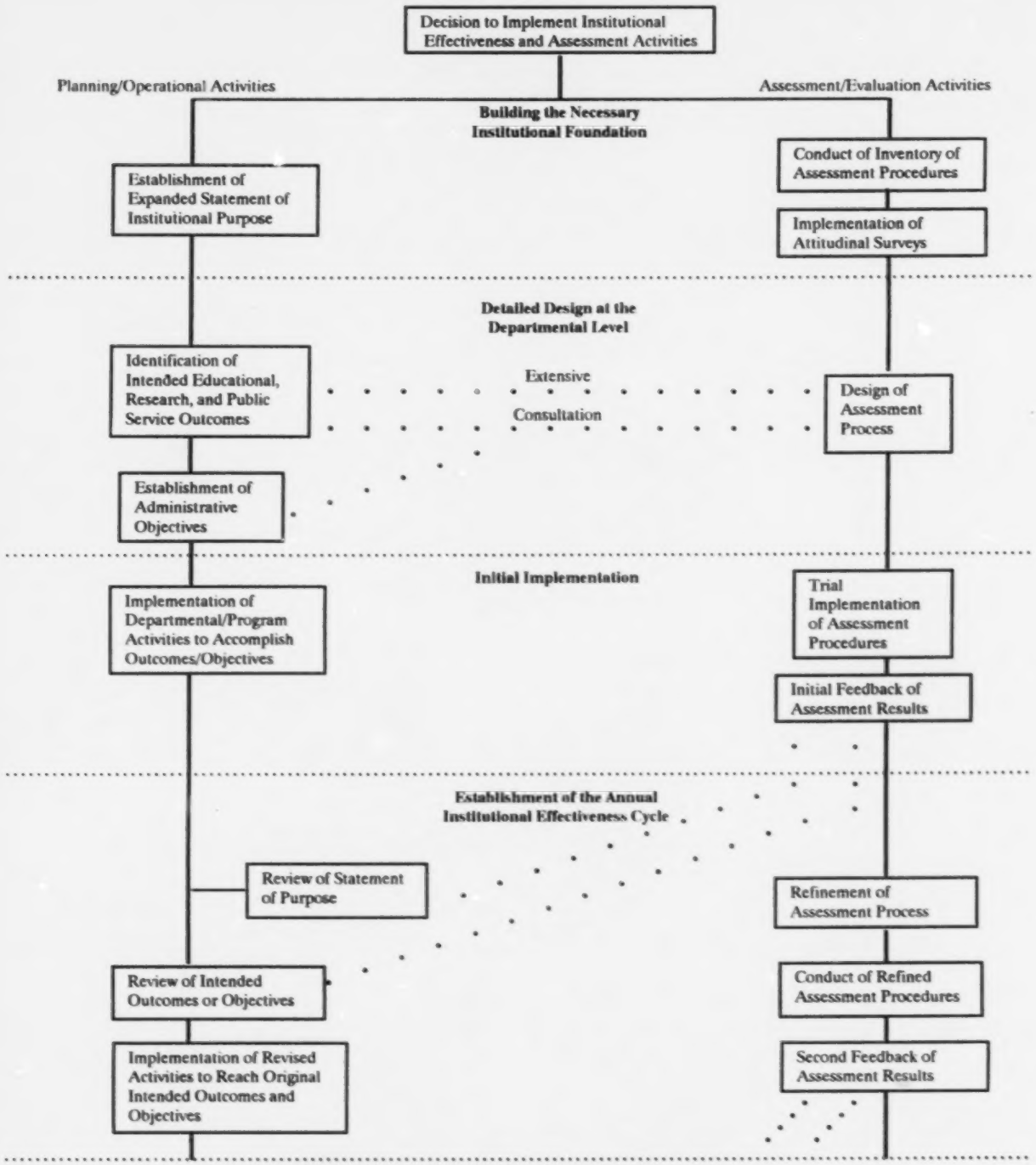
4. Adjustments (in the institution's purpose, intended results, or activities) made on the basis on assessment findings. (Assessment results can be used both to improve effectiveness and to demonstrate accomplishments.)

Institutional Effectiveness Paradigm*



*Nichols, James O. (1991). A Practitioner's Handbook for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Outcomes Assessment Implementation. New York: Agathon Press.

A Four-Year Plan for Implementation of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Activities


Decision to Implement Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Activities
Planning/Operational Activities
Assessment/Evaluation Activities
Building the Necessary Institutional Foundation
Establishment of Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose
Conduct of Inventory of Assessment Procedures
Implementation of Attitudinal Surveys
Detailed Design at the Departmental Level
Identification of Intended Educational, Research, and Public Service Outcomes
Extensive
Consultation
Design of Assessment Process
Establishment of Administrative Objectives
Initial Implementation
Implementation of Departmental/Program Activities to Accomplish Outcomes/Objectives
Trial Implementation of Assessment Procedures
Initial Feedback of Assessment Results
Establishment of the Annual Institutional Effectiveness Cycle
Review of Statement of Purpose
Refinement of Assessment Process
Review of Intended Outcomes or Objectives
Conduct of Refined Assessment Procedures
Implementation of Revised Activities to Reach Original Intended Outcomes and Objectives
Second Feedback of Assessment Results
REPEAT FOURTH-YEAR ACTIVITIES-CONDUCT COMPREHENSIVE INSTITUTIONAL AND PROCESS EVALUATION IN EIGHTH YEAR

. . . End of Implementation Year

*Nichols, James O. (1991). A Practitioner's Handbook for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Outcomes Assessment Implementation. New York: Agathon Press.

This model for assessing institutional effectiveness is based on the assumptions (1) that institutions intend to do something meaningful that has potential for actually increasing effectiveness, (2) that administration wants in no way to infringe on academic freedom, and (3) that implementation should not place an undue burden on already limited institutional resources.

Because of the scope, time intensity, and sequential nature of the components of this mode, Nichols recommends implementation over at least a four-year period. Experience with the model at a number of schools has shown implementation over a period of four years to be practical. This gradual implementation allows time for those throughout the institution to understand and support the process and spreads the time commitment and expense of the efforts over an extended time period.

After initial implementation of the process, an annual cycle must be established so that the activities are integrated into the normal, on-going efforts of the institution. It is important to note that the implementation of an annual cycle does not mean that everything has to be assessed every year.

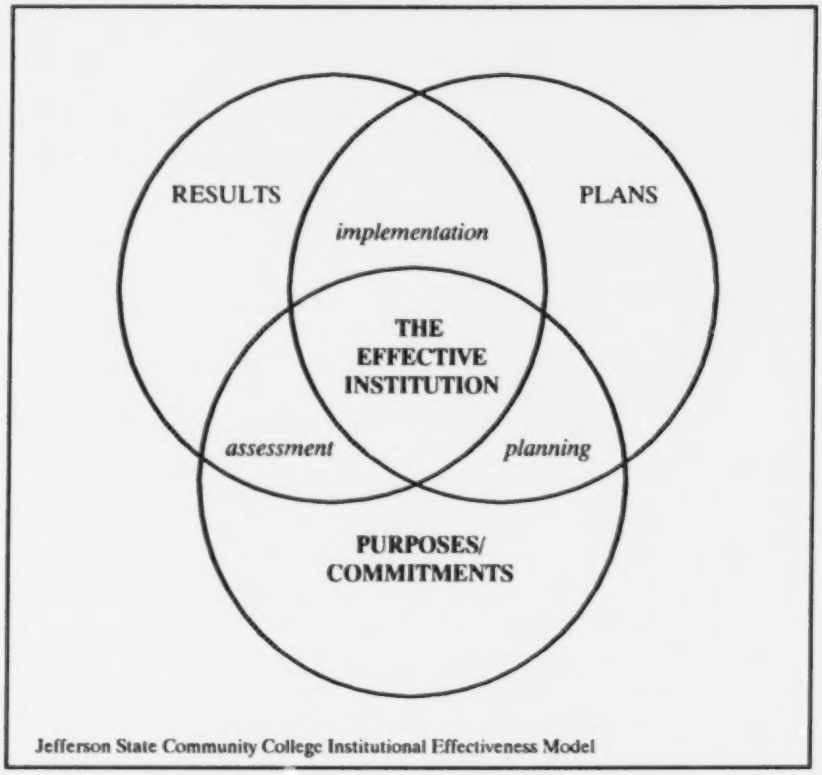
Nichols stresses that each institution is unique and must tailor the model to suit its own circumstances. Further, experience with planning processes in higher education has shown the difficulty of maintaining a process through numerous iterations. Integrating the planning and assessment efforts with the annual budgeting process of the institution provides a strong incentive for personnel to maintain their commitment to institutional effectiveness efforts.

THE JEFFERSON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MODEL

In the Jefferson State Institutional Effectiveness Model, three components (**purposes, plans, and results**) are represented by circles that overlap each other in three processes (**planning, implementation, and assessment**. When all components and processes are fully integrated, the effective institution emerges. This is represented by the center section of the model where all three circles overlap.

PURPOSES/COMMITMENTS. The stated purposes of an institution are central to any attempt to evaluate its effectiveness. Jefferson State's Statement of Philosophy and Purpose identifies three broad purposes and lists a series of nine commitments that describe the activities through which the college attempts to achieve its purposes. In operationalizing the institutional purpose at the "unit" or function level, each unit developed purpose/commitment statements that relate the unit to the college purposes and identify responsibilities that the unit has accepted for fulfilling the college's purpose.

PLANS/PLANNING. The annual planning process is initiated with a review of the college purposes, long-range goals, and planning assumptions. Evaluation results are integrated into the planning process through a review of the results from the previous year. An annual Evaluation of Effectiveness Report summarizes the results of the college's efforts to achieve its goals during the past year and identifies issues and concerns that should be addressed in planning for the coming year.



Jefferson State Community College Institutional Effectiveness Model

Institutional Action Priorities are recommended by the College Planning Council and approved by the President. Planning then moves to the operational unit and individual levels with the long-range goals providing the context and the institutional action priorities providing the emphasis. After negotiations, unit and area plans are incorporated into the College Annual Plan and a college budget is developed. College personnel are able to observe the direct relationship of planning to budget decisions.

RESULTS/EVALUATION. A comprehensive and systematic assessment of effectiveness is based on analysis from four perspectives, that of the institution as a whole, the operational units responsible for its functioning, the personnel of these units, and the students. In each case the goal of evaluation is to provide valid and relevant information that is useful for improving effectiveness.

A key component of the evaluation plan is the identification of criteria against which effectiveness can be measured. Expected results/outcomes, effectiveness standards and performance measures are established for the institution, its units, its personnel, and its students. Evaluations compare results achieved with those expected or intended and provides information that can be used to improve programs and services by reducing the disparity between results intended and those achieved.

INTEGRATION. Each of the components - purposes/commitments, plans/planning, results/evaluation - is an integral part of efforts to achieve institutional effectiveness. Although the emphasis on each component varies during the planning and evaluation cycle, it is only when they are fully integrated that the college becomes truly effective.